

# FONT HILL WETLANDS PARK



*"We need the tonic of wilderness,  
to wade sometimes in marshes where  
the bittern and the meadow-hen lurk,  
and hear the booming snipe...  
We can never have enough of nature."  
Henry David Thoreau*

## **BACKGROUND**

**The Font Hill Wetland Park Project was an exciting and unique undertaking. The County utilized capital project bonds, a matching grant from the Maryland Department of the Environment, and the resources of four private developers to create the funding for this unique project. The project was the first State-County-private sector joint venture wetland project ever developed in the State of Maryland. The developers contributed monies to mitigate for lost wetlands and while mitigation is required by law, these developers could have easily paid a fee or done their elsewhere. Instead, they chose to work cooperatively with the County and the State to help create this fine, first of its kind wetland project. We wish to thank the following developers for their efforts:**

**Exploration Research, Inc. of Ellicott City, MD, did the design, engineering, and construction of this project.**

**One of the real benefits of such partnerships is the resultant economies of scale. These economies apply not only to the efficient use of money, but also to the effectiveness of the function of our natural resources. By pooling our capital, we were able to conserve dollars and create wetlands of significant size. When several small mitigation projects are combined, the resultant wetland is large enough to look, feel and function like a natural wetland. In addition to larger wetlands being more effective, they provide the added benefit of being able to be used as educational facilities.**

**Just as this project provided us with a unique partnership opportunity, we feel that it provides the residents of Howard County with an exceptional educational and passive recreational experience.**

#### **FUNDING**

**This project was jointly funded by private developers, the State of Maryland and Howard County. By teaming up with developers and the State, the County's cost was only \$494,050 or 51% of the total cost of the project.**

<b>Developers</b>	<b>\$217,000</b>	<b>22.5%</b>
<b>State MDE Grant</b>	<b>255,500</b>	<b>26.4%</b>
<b>County Capital Project Bonds</b>	<b><u>494,050</u></b>	<b><u>51.1%</u></b>
	<b>\$966,550</b>	<b>100 %</b>

#### **THE PROJECT**

**The Font Hill Project encompasses twenty-one acres of land and includes the creation of nearly three acres of forested, scrub/shrub and emergent wetlands. A total of over 2000 trees and understory plants were planted along with over 7800 aquatic plants.**

**The project also incorporated the complete rebuilding and enlarging of two ponds, the construction of pathways, boardwalks, observation and fishing piers, and the stabilization of three hundred feet of stream banks.**

**Four different techniques were used in our stream stabilization project. In addition to the traditional riprap armoring, we used several bioengineering techniques: branch layering, live staking and biologs. Such bioengineering techniques are not only sound from an engineering standpoint, they are beneficial to fish and wildlife, providing food, cover and breeding areas for birds, mammals, invertebrates and fish. Much of the native vegetation was left undisturbed and one can find small pockets of wildflowers interspersed throughout the site.**

## **JOINT EFFORT**

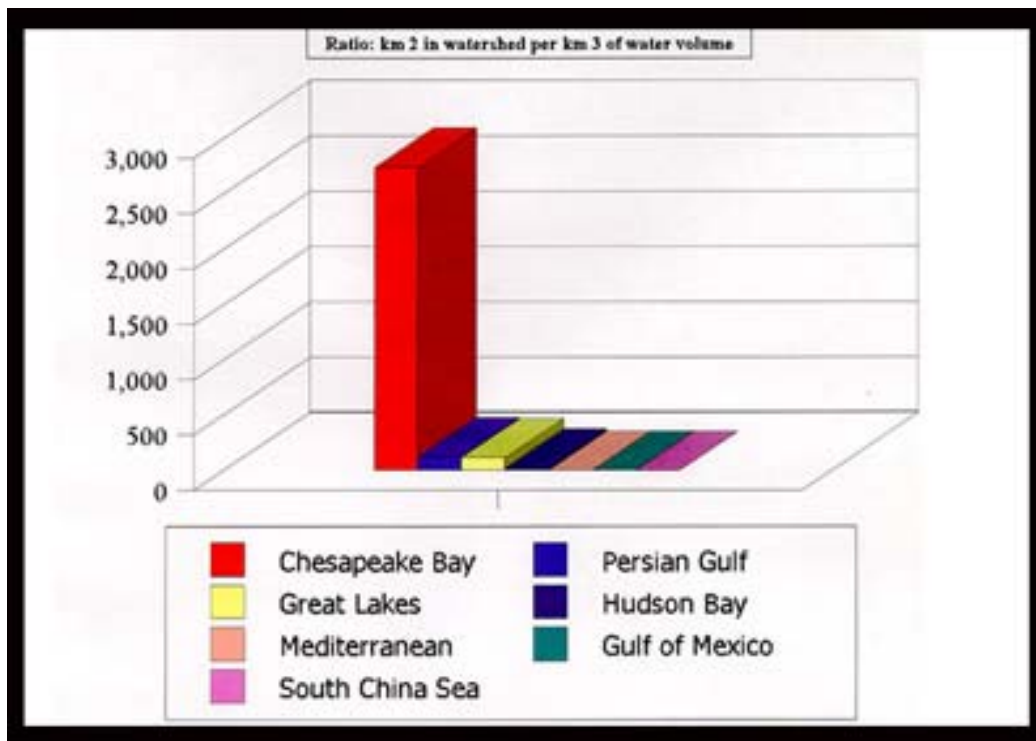
**The funding of this project was not the only area where this was a cooperative effort. During the planning process we held meetings to review the project with members of the community. In addition, we also sent copies of the plans to numerous organizations for their review and input. We wanted this to be the best, most comprehensive wetlands project possible. The following organizations reviewed our plans. Their comments and suggestions provided valuable input to this project:**

- \* U. S. Dept of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service**
- \* Maryland DNR Fish, Heritage & Wildlife Administration**
- \* Maryland DNR Wildlife Division**
- \* Maryland Dept. of Transportation, Environmental Programs Division**
- \* National Institute for Urban Wildlife**
- \* Maryland Ornithological Society**
- \* Audubon Society**

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF WETLANDS**

**Wetlands are vital to a sound and viable Chesapeake Bay. They serve as nature's kidneys performing a multitude of functions and providing many benefits. Among them are:**

- |                                       |                                 |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>* Flood Control</b>                | <b>* Pollutant Interception</b> |
| <b>* Ground Water Recharge</b>        | <b>* Sediment Traps</b>         |
| <b>* Toxic Residue Neutralization</b> | <b>* Waste Treatment</b>        |
| <b>* Education/ Recreation</b>        | <b>* Wildlife Habitat</b>       |
| <b>* Aesthetics</b>                   |                                 |



**The wetlands in our area are especially critical as we are in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Very few people understand the importance of our activity and how we impact the Bay especially since we appear to be far removed from this magnificent estuary. Runoff from every lawn, road, parking lot, construction site in Howard County eventually ends up in the Bay. One factor alone makes these impacts so much more critical to the Chesapeake Bay than any place else on earth. That is the ratio of watershed to water volume. As you can see in the accompanying graph, the amount of drainage area (measured in square kilometers) to volume of water (measured in cubic meters of water) is far greater than anywhere else in the world.**

**And if that weren't bad enough, consider this. The Chesapeake Bay watershed covers approximately 64,000 square miles, or 1.7% of the landmass of the United States, but is inhabited by 5.2% of the total population of the U.S. So as you can see, what we do is extremely important to the health and survival of one of our most precious ecosystems.**

**The list of wildlife found at Font Hill is also noteworthy. Recent inventories have recorded 104 species of birds, 53 species of dragonflies & damselflies, at least 7 species of amphibians and numerous species of mammals within the confines of the park. As the plantings mature and develop, we are confident these number will continue to escalate affording the park visitors many opportunities to study and observe wetlands and their wildlife.**

**Some species that have been seen at Font Hill that are worthy of noting are:**

**Birds: Virginia Rail, Marsh Wren, Common Moorhen, Least Flycatcher, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Great Blue Heron, Red-tailed Hawk (see photo) and Great Egret (see photo).**



**Amphibians: Spring Peeper, Pickerel Frog, Bullfrog, Gray Treefrog, Green Frog, American Toad, Western or Striped Chorus Frog.**

**Dragonflies/Damselflies: Common Green Darner, Common Whitetail, Black Saddlebags, Blue Dasher Ebony Jewelwing, Widow Skimmer**

**Mammals: fox, beaver and of course, White-tailed Deer.**